

Effective Messaging and the Hierarchy of Desire

The evolution of consciousness is propelled by a hierarchy of desire. In plain English, this means that as a person develops she wants more and she wants better.

The first desires that manifest for a person are food and shelter, next comes sex and family, followed by money and power. Finally, a person wants respect, knowledge, and spirituality. (For our purpose we can define spirituality as a sense of well-being, purpose, and connection.)

We must understand, each of these desires is not replaced by the higher one but engulfed by it. We do not trade up, one for the other. We continue to want and need fulfillment of the lower desires even as the higher ones are revealed to us. First I want food, then I want food and sex. Then I want food, sex and money then food, sex, money, power and fame and on and on it goes. Our desires seem to grow exponentially and seemingly without end.

Today, anyone mapping out a strategy for obtaining what they want in life is confronted by a terrifying reality and a vexing problem. Every day more and more people are entering the modern age. How then can we all have everything we want when we plainly see that our environment can not sustain endless consumption?

In the past, those in power have come to a logical yet brutal conclusion. Life is a zero-sum game. If I win someone else must lose.

Today, this logic – sound as it once was – is faltering. Those of us who are thinking about these things are acutely aware that our current systems are in crisis. If we can't find a new way of organizing society we could lose everything. Not only won't we find new ways to fulfill ourselves but our basic necessities, which we currently take for granted, could be taken from us. If we can't build a system that is inclusive there will be no respite. Whatever system comes next it must balance consumption against fulfillment for all, instead of the pitting the haves against the have-nots.

Although this crisis is daunting we should not despair. Science and human nature are on our side. Organisms evolve only when they are forced to. This means that we will succeed because we must. We will get to where we are going but our job is to get there as pleasantly as possible.

We are on the brink of a new era. A dawning of a new globally connected world. But the way forward will not be a straight line. We evolve in a series of messy advancements and retreats. Any student of history knows this to be true. Our current political reality is proof of that. People who are on the losing end of the rush towards globalism – for example, factory workers, here in the United States – are logically embracing protectionism and nationalism over global connection. If our analysis were to be based on a snapshot we might think that we are moving away from globalism for good. The truth, however, is that we are witnessing a correction. With a better understanding and planning, these destabilizing swings will, hopefully, be better managed in the future. Today's thinkers are going to have to conceive of systems that work for everyone and also figure out how to transition to it.

The exact shape of our future systems are not yet clear but thoughts and ideas that will give rise to the solutions are already percolating up in our collective consciousness. What is clear is that we are going to have to take care of each other in order to take care of ourselves.

At this point, the businessperson in you should be getting apprehensive about the direction this article is taking. Business people answer to the bottom line. They need to hone their message, reach their audience and sell their products. They do not have time to save the world.

I get it. But the smart business person must adapt to survive.

Advertisers, marketers and branding specialists are expert at understanding what makes people tick. They understand the desire and know how to speak to it. Look at the current landscape and the language being used today. Words like simplicity, sustainability, balance, unity, and connection have become staples in the world of messaging. This is not by chance. The astute businessman knows that in order to reach their audience, they need to speak, not only to their current desires but to those that are latent, subconscious and burgeoning.

As much as people feel like they want to be part of the solution the truth is people operate in their self-interests but as we move into the future people are going to understand that their well-being is completely dependent on the health of the collective. This awakening will change everything.

Many people in fact already understand this. These early adopters understand that feeling like you are taking care of the world is not the same as actually doing it. The masses will eventually understand that caring for everyone is the only way to avert disaster. When this reality sets in people will change.

What is important now is that companies that want to be smart about the future understand what is coming and act early. As technology advances people are becoming more sophisticated. Today even people who are not in advertising or marketing are experts at messaging. It will not be enough for a company to appear as they are offering solutions they will, in fact, have to follow through. Know this well if you want to be on the winning end of the societal transformation underway.

Human nature has not changed, at least not yet. What has changed is that our environment demands that we come into balance with nature and with each other. Capitalism and consumption will be valued and necessary parts of our lives, long into the future, but the rules are changing. Everyone will need to be included in the global system for us to achieve a new equilibrium and renewed stability.

Let's channel our natural desire to do good and move towards connection with humility and concern for everyone.